



Washington State  
Department of Social  
& Health Services

# News *Release*

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## ODHH Selects Washington Relay Provider

**OLYMPIA** – The Department of Social and Health Services' Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing has renewed its contract with Sprint Relay to provide telecommunications relay services in Washington state. Sprint Relay has been providing Washington Relay Services since 1998 and the contract had expired earlier this year.

Washington Relay is a free [Relay Service](#) that allows hearing, deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind and speech-disabled callers who use text-telephone (TTY), captioned telephone, telebraille and Speech to Speech (STS) features of the WA Relay services to communicate with the hearing party through specially trained Relay Operators.

Washington Relay Services are available 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. There are no restrictions on the number or length of calls. The service is confidential, and conversation records are not maintained.

Sprint Relay will continue to provide outreach services to increase awareness to hearing users and businesses about relay services. Many people think that a relay call is a type of telephone marketing service and often hang up on relay callers. One of the outreach activities is called "Do Not Hang Up." This activity involves sending informational postcards and other materials to key businesses such as banks, hospitals, medical clinics, government agencies and services industries. Sprint Relay also has posted a "Do Not Hang Up" video clip on the Washington Relay website developed for ODHH. To view the video go to the following link and click the "play" button: <http://www.washingtonrelay.com/hangup.html>.

In addition, Sprint Relay has agreed to contract with non-profit organizations and individual subcontractors to provide awareness to Washington residents about new telecommunications relay features available on the internet and wireless network.

In December 2009, in compliance with federal law requiring that telecommunication relay features be provided to persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind and speech disabled, ODHH released a Request for Qualifications and Quotations. Several major telecommunication relay providers submitted bids. A team of people knowledgeable in the area of telecommunications technology and the needs of deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind and speech-disabled relay users reviewed and scored the proposals. Sprint Relay provided a price and

services proposal that would best benefit Washington residents and was selected as the winning bidder.

After several months of negotiations between Sprint Relay representatives and ODHH's team, a three-year contract was signed and became effective December 1, 2010. Sprint Relay and ODHH agreed to a unique partnership that will allow ODHH to participate in the testing of new relay services and features developed by Sprint before they are made available to all relay users. The relay users could provide feedback to Sprint Relay for improvements. This will allow Washington Relay to bring "cutting-edge" relay services to Washington residents when they become available.

"Washington Relay will always be essential in enabling effective communication between people with hearing loss and people with hearing on the telephone. It is especially true with the popularity of captioned telephone among hard of hearing users," said Eric Raff, ODHH Director. He explained, "This contract ensures continuity of a vital lifeline to communicating with family, friends and businesses."

DSHS and the ODHH have an Internet website where deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind and speech-disabled people can obtain information about a variety of telecommunication relay services designed to empower them to communicate with their hearing counterparts. To view the list of relay service providers go to the following web link and click on Relay Services:  
<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/hrsa/odhh>.

ODHH also provides other services to better serve Washington residents who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled.

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